LITTLE SKY HIGH

HEZEKIAH BUTTERWORTH

To Milton B. Bagley.
From Cousin Carrie Conway.

Xmas 1905.

Mrs. H. Davidson

The "Nine to Twelve" Series

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"IT OPENED A GREAT MOUTH, AND SMOKE SEEMED TO ISSUE FROM IT." Page 41.

LITTLE SKY-HIGH

OR THE SURPRISING DOINGS OF WASHEE WASHEE WANG:

BY

HEZEKIAH BUTTERWORTH

New York.
Thomas Y. Crowell & Co.
Publishers.

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OR THE SURPRISING DOINGS OF WASHEE-WASHEE-WANG

BY

HEZEKIAH BUTTERWORTH

AUTHOR OF "IN THE DAYS OF JEFFERSON," "THE BORDENTOWN STORY-TELLERS," "LITTLE ARTHUR'S HISTORY OF ROME," "THE SCHOOLHOUSE ON THE COLUMBIA"

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NOTE.

THE story of Sky-High is partly founded on a true incident of a young Chinese nobleman's education, and is written to illustrate the happy relations that might exist between the children of different countries, if each child treated all other good children like "wangs."

28 WORCESTER STREET, BOSTON.
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CONTENTS.

	PAGE
I.	
Below Stairs	7
II.	
Before the Mandarin	13
III.	
Lucy's Cup of Tea	20
IV.	
How Sky-High Called the Governor	26
V.	
Sky-High's Wonder-Tale	31
VI.	
The Mandarin Plate	35
VII.	
Sky-High's Kite	39
VIII.	
A Wan	44

IX. PAGE

Lucy's Jataka Story 48

X.

Sky-High's Easter Sunday 51

XI.

Sky-High's Fireworks 55

XII.

A Chinese Santa Claus 62

XIII.

A Legend of Tea 68

XIV.

Mrs. Van Buren's Christmas Tale 70

XV.

In the House-Boy's Care 76

XVI.

In the Little Wang's Land 82

LITTLE SKY-HIGH.

I.

BELOW STAIRS.

THE children came home from school — Charles and Lucy.

"I have a surprise for you in the kitchen," said their mother, Mrs. Van Buren. "No, take off your things first, then you may go down and see. Now don't laugh — a laugh that hurts any one's feelings is so unkind — tip-toe too! No, Charlie, one at a time; let Lucy go first."

Lucy tip-toed with eyes full of wonder to the dark banister-stairs that led down to the quarters below. Her light feet were as still as a little mouse's in a cheese closet. Presently she came back with dancing eyes.

"Oh, mother! where did you get him? His eyes are like two almonds, and his braided hair dangles away down almost to the floor, and there are black silk tassels on the end of it, and kitty is playing with them; and when Norah caught my eye she bent over double to laugh, but he

kept right on shelling peas. Charlie, come and see; let me go with Charlie, mother?"

Charlie followed Lucy, tip-toeing to the foot of the banister, where a platform-stair commanded a view of the kitchen.

It was a very nice kitchen, with gas, hot water and cold, ranges and gas-stoves, and two great cupboards with glass doors through which all sorts of beautiful serving-dishes shone. Green ivies filled the window-cases, and geraniums lined the window-sills. A fine old parrot from the Andes inhabited a large cage with an open door, hanging over the main window, where the wire netting let in the air from the apple boughs.

On reaching the platform-stair, Charlie was as astonished as Lucy could wish.

There sat a little Chinese boy, as it seemed, although at second glance he looked rather old for a boy. He wore blue clothes and was shelling peas. His glossy black "pigtail" reached down to the floor, and the kitten was trying to raise the end of it in her pretty white paws. As Lucy had said, heavy black silk cords were braided in with the hair, with handsome tassels.

The parrot had come out of her cage, and was eying the boy and the kitten, plainly hoping for mischief. Suddenly she caught Charlie's eye, and with a flap of her wings she cried out to him.

"He's a quare one! Now, isn't he?"

The bird had heard Irish Nora say this a

number of times during the day and had learned the words. Charlie could not help laughing out in response. With this encouragement Polly came down towards the door of the cage, and thrust her green and yellow head out into the room. "Now, isn't he, sure?" cried she, in Nora's own voice.

Nora was sole ruler of this cheerful realm below stairs; the only other inhabitants of the kitchen were the parrot and the kitten, and now this Chinese boy. Nora's special work-room was a great pantry with a latticed window. Near-by a wide door led out into a little garden of apple, pear, and cherry trees; the garden had a grape-arbor too, which ran from the door to a roomy cabin. Here was every convenience for washing and ironing.

Nora was a portly woman, with a round face, large forehead, and a little nose which seemed to be always laughing. She was a merry soul; and she used to tell "the children," as Charles and Lucy were called, "Liliputian stories," tales of the Fairy Schoolmaster of Irish lore.

The Chinese boy did not look up to Polly as she gazed and exclaimed at him, but shelled his peas.

Presently, however, the pretty kitten whirled the industrious boy's pigtail around in a circle until it pulled. Then he cast his almond eyes at her, and addressed her in a tone like the clatter of rolling rocks.

"Ok-oka-ok-a-a!"

The kitten flew to the other side of the room, and Nora appeared from the pantry. When she saw the two children on the stairs, she put her hands on her sides and laughed with her nose. "We've a quare one here, now, haven't we?" said she.

Polly stretched her lovely head out into the room from the cage, and flapped her wings, and swung too and fro, and the kitten returned, whereupon the boy drew up his pigtail and tied it around his neck like a necktie.

"See, children," said Nora, pointing, "what your mother has brought home! She says we must all be good to him, and it's never hard I would be to any living crater. He came down from the sun, he says. What do you think his name is? And you could never guess! It's Sky-High, which is to say, come-down-from-the-sun. And a man in a coach it was that brought him. Sure, I never came here in a coach, but on my two square feet; he came from the consul's office — Misther Bradley's — and a ship it was that brought him there. Ah, but he's a quare kitchen-boy!

"But your mother, all with a heart as warm as pudding, she's going to educate him; and if he does well, she's going to promote him up aloft, to take care of all the foine rooms, and furniture and things, and to wait upon the table, and tend the door for aught I know. She made me promise I would be remarkable good to him — but it don't do no harm for me to say that he's

a quare one! *he* can't understand it — *he* speaks the language of the sun, all like the cracking of nuts, or the rattling of a loose thunder-storm over the shingles."

"Sky-High?" ventured little Lucy mischievously.

The Chinese boy looked up, with a quick blink of his eyes.

"At your service, madam," said he in very good English.

Nora lifted her great arms.

"And he does speak English! Who knows but he understood all I said, and what the parrot said too. Poll, you go into your cage! 'At your service, madam!' And did you hear it, Lucy? No errand-boy ever spoke in the loikes o' that before! I'd think h'd been brought up among the quality. It maybe he's a Fairy Shoemaker, spaking the queen's court-language, and no errand-boy at all!"

A bell sounded up-stairs, and the two children ran back.

"Oh, mother, never was there a boy like that!" said Charlie.

"Well," said Mrs. Van Buren, "you shall tell your father how you found little Sky-High — it will be a pretty after-supper story. I want you to think kindly of him, for if he does well he is to stay with us a year."

The children found their father in the dining-room; and as they kissed him they both cried, "Oh, oh!"

"What is it now?" asked Mr. Van Buren. "What has happened to-day?"

"Wait until after supper," said Mrs. Van Buren; "then they shall tell you of a curious event in the kitchen. There really is something to tell," she added, smiling.

II.

BEFORE THE MANDARIN!

As Mr. Van Buren was a prudent, wise, and good-natured man, he left all the affairs of housekeeping to his wife. He had so seldom been "below stairs" that he never had even made the acquaintance of Polly, the lively bird of the kitchen. The kitten sometimes came up to visit him; on which occasions she simply purred, and sank down to rest on his knee.

After supper was over, Mr. Van Buren caught Lucy up.

"And now what amusing thing is it that my little girl has to tell me — something new that Nora has told you of the Fairy Shoemaker?"

"There's really a wonderful thing down in the kitchen, father," said Lucy; "wonderfuller than anything in the Fairy Shoemaker tales."

"And where did it come from?"

"Down from the sun, father, and Nora says it came in a coach!"

Mr. Van Buren turned to his wife.

"It came from the Consul's," she said — "from Consul Bradley's."

"Has Consul Bradley been here?" he asked,

thinking some Chinese curio had been shipped over. Consul Bradley was a Chinese consular agent, a man of considerable wealth, with a large knowledge of the world, and a friend of the Van Buren family.

"No," said Mrs. Van Buren, "but his coachman has brought me a kitchen-boy."

"Well, that *is* rather wonderful! Is that what you have down-stairs, Lucy?"

"That doesn't half tell it, father," cried Charlie. "He's a little Chineseman!"

"I was in the Consul's office this morning," went on Mrs. Van Buren, smiling at her husband's astonishment; "and the Consul said to me, 'Wouldn't you like to have a neat, trim, tidy, honest, faithful, tender-hearted, polite boy to learn general work?' I said to the Consul, 'Yes, that is the person that I have been needing for years.' He said, 'Would you have any prejudice against a little Chinese servant, if he were trusty, after the general principles I have described?' I said to him, 'None whatever.' He continued: 'A Chinese lad from Manchuria has been sent to me by a friend in the hong, and I am asked to find him a place to learn American home-making ideas in one of the best families. Your family is that place — shall I send him?' So he came in the Consul's coach, as Lucy said, and with him an immense trunk covered with Chinese brush-marks. He seems to be a little gentleman: and when I asked him his name he said, 'The Consul told me to tell you

to call me Sky-High.' He doesn't speak except to make replies, but these are in very good English."

"May I give my opinion?" asked little Lucy.

"Well, Lucy," said her mother, smiling, "what is your opinion?"

"He looks like an emperor's son, or a mandarin," said Lucy.

"And what put such a thought into your head?" asked her mother.

"The pictures on my Chinese fans," said Lucy promptly.

"Well," said Mrs. Van Buren, "if he does well, you shall treat him exactly as though he were the son of an emperor or a wang — he says that kings are called wangs in his land."

"Then he would be a little wang," said Lucy. "I will make believe he is a little wang while he stays."

So Sky-High became a little wang to Lucy; and a wonderful little wang he promised to be.

At Mr. Van Buren's wish, little Sky-High was sent for. The Chinese boy asked Charlie, who went down for him, that he might have time to change his dress so that he might suitably appear before "the mandarin in the parlor." (A "mandarin" in China is a kind of mayor or magistrate of rank more or less exalted.)

Charlie came back with the kitchen-boy's message. "He says that he wants a little time to change his clothes so that he may suitably appear before the mandarin in the parlor."

"The mandarin in the parlor!" exclaimed Mr. Van Buren, in a burst of laughter. "My father used to speak of mandarins — he traded ginseng for silks and teas at Canton in the days of the hongs — the open market or trading-places. That was a generation ago. There are no longer any store-houses for ginseng on the wharves of Boston. Yet my father made all his money in this way. 'The mandarin in the parlor.' Sky-High has a proper respect for superiors; I like the boy for that."

By and by the sound of soft feet were heard at the folding-doors.

"Come in, Sky-High," said Mrs. Van Buren.

The little kitchen-boy appeared, and all eyes lighted up in wonder. He wore a silk tunic fringed with what looked like gold. His stockings were white, and his shoes were spangled with silver. The broad sleeves of his tunic were richly embroidered — he seemed to wing himself in. A beautiful fan was in his hand, which he very slowly waved to and fro, as if following some custom. Mrs. Van Buren wondered if servants in China came fanning themselves when summoned by their master. Sky-High bowed and bowed and bowed again, then moved with a gliding motion in front of Mr. Van Buren's chair, still bowing and bowing, and there he remained in an attentive bent attitude. The kitten leaped up from Mr. Van Buren's knee, then jumped down, plainly with an intention to play with the tempting pig-

tail — but Lucy sprang and captured the snowy little creature.

"So you are Sky-High?" said Mr. Van Buren. "Well, a right neat and smart-looking boy you are!"

"The Mandarin of Milton!" said the glittering little fellow, bending. "My ancestors have heard of the mandarins of Boston and Milton, even in the days of Hoqua."

"Hoqua?" Mr. Van Buren looked at the boy with interest, "You know of Hoqua?"

"Who is Hoqua?" asked Mrs. Van Buren.

Mr. Van Buren turned to her. "I will tell you later."

"Hoqua, madam," said Sky-High, bowing to his mistress, "was the great merchant mandarin of Canton in the time of the opening of that port to all countries."

How did a Chinese servant know anything of Hoqua? This was the question that puzzled Mr. Van Buren. "Sky-High, how many people have you in your country?" he asked.

"It is said four hundred million."

"We have only seventy millions here, Sky-High."

"I have been told," said Sky-High.

"And who is ruler over all your people?" asked Mr. Van Buren.

"The Celestial Emperor, the Son of Heaven, the Brother of the Sun and Moon, the Dweller in Rooms of Gold, the Light of Life, the Father of the Nations."

"You fill me with wonder, Sky-High. We have a plain President. Do your people die to make room for more millions?"

"My people value not to die, O Mandarin!" said the boy.

"Such throngs of people — they all have souls, think you?"

A dark flush came upon little Sky-High's forehead. He opened his narrow black eyes upon his master. "Souls? They have souls, O Mandarin! Souls are all my people have for long."

"Where go their souls when your people die?"

"To their ancestors! With them they live among the lotus blooms."

"We will excuse you now," said Mr. Van Buren to Sky-High. "You have answered intelligently, according to your knowledge.

The kitchen-boy bowed himself out without turning his back towards any one, describing many glittering angles, and waving his fan. He looked like something vanishing, a bit of fireworks going out.

As he reached the stair, the little white cat sprang from Lucy's arms, and skipped swiftly after the curious inmate of the kitchen. The long, swinging braid was a temptation. The last glimpse Charles and Lucy had was of an embroidered sleeve as Sky-High reached backward and caught the kitten to his shoulder, and bound her fast with his queue.

Charlie clapped his hands. He thought there would be fun in the house. He knew he should like Sky-High. As they went upstairs he said to Lucy, "The little Chinaman was a heathen, and father was a missionary."

Mr. Van Buren heard him, and called him back. "The little Chinaman was a new book," said he, "and your father was reading. See that you treat the boy well."

III.

LUCY'S CUP OF TEA.

Mr. Van Buren's home was on Milton Hill. It overlooked Boston and the harbor. The upper windows commanded a glorious view in the morning. Before it glittered the sea with its white sails, and behind it rose the Blue Hills with their green orchards and woods. The house was colonial, with gables and cupola, and was surrounded by hour-glass elms, arbors, and evergreen trees. It had been built by Mr. Van Buren's father in the days of the China trade and of the primitive mandarin merchant, Hoqua.

Mr. Van Buren, a tea-merchant of Boston, received his goods through merchant vessels, and not through his own ships as his father had done.

The next morning Mrs. Van Buren went down early into her kitchen to assign Sky-High his work.

Nora, in a loud whisper that the birds in the apple-boughs might have heard, informed Mrs. Van Buren that the new Chinese servant was "no good as a sweeper," and asked what he did with his pigtail when he slept. "It must take

him a good part of to-morrer to comb his hair, it is that long," she said. "And wouldn't you better use him up-stairs for an errand-boy altogether now? Sure, you wouldn't be after teaching him any cooking at all?" Nora was an old servant and had many privileges of speech.

Mrs. Van Buren smiled, and arranged that little Sky-High should wash and iron clothes in the cabin under the blooming trees, at the end of the arbor.

"And if you learn well," said she, "I may let you tend the door, and wait upon the table, and keep the rooms in order."

"And then you will be up-stairs," said little Lucy, "where it is very pleasant."

"And now, Sky-High, tell me how it is that you can speak English so well," said Mrs. Van Buren, as they stood in the cabin, where the prospect of solitude seemed to please the boy. A gleam of something like mischief appeared on little Sky-High's face.

"And, Madame de Mandarin," said he, "I speak French too. *Parlez-vous Français*, Mademoiselle Lucy?" he added rapidly, turning to the little American girl. "*Pardonne*, Madame la Mandarin!"

"Sky-High will not say 'Mandarin' any more," said Mrs. Van Buren. "There are no mandarins in this country, and when Sky-High is called into the rooms above he will wear his plain clothes, not spangled clothes. Now, who taught you English?"

"My master, madam."

"Say mistress, Sky-High."

"My master, mistress."

"Where did you live in Manchuria?"

"In the house of a mandarin."

"And who was your master?"

"The mandarin, mistress."

"Do mandarins in China teach their servants to speak English?"

"Some mandarins do, your grace."

"Do not say 'your grace,' Sky-High, but simply mistress. Ladies have no titles in America. Where is the city in which you lived?"

"In Manchuria, on the coast, on the Crystal Sea."

The kitten came running into the kitchen, and at once leaped on to the end of Sky-High's pigtail.

The boy gave his pigtail a sudden whisk.

"Pie-cat?" asked he.

"No, no!" said Mrs. Van Buren in horror. "We have no pie-cats in this country. Was there an English teacher in your house?"

Little Sky-High was winding his pigtail about his neck for safety. He saw Lucy giggling, and a laugh came into his own eyes.

"*Pardonne*, mistress. We had an English trader at the hong — at the trade-house."

"Do they send servants to English teachers in China?"

"When they are to grow up and deal with English business, mistress."

"Did you meet English people at the hong?"

"Yes, mistress."

"Who were they?"

"I cannot name them. There were my lords and the admiral; and the American Consul he came, and the German Consul he came, and the American travelers they came, and Russian officers they came."

"How old are you, Sky-High?"

"There have passed over me fifteen New-Year days, mistress."

"Well, Sky-High," said his mistress, "I am going to give you this cabin under the trees, where you may do your washings and all your ironings. No one else shall come here to work. I have decided to have you begin to-morrow to bring up the breakfast."

The next morning Sky-High performed his first service at the breakfast-table. He brought up the coffee while Mr. Van Buren was saying grace. He paused before the table.

"Sleepy, sleepy!" he exclaimed softly, "all sleepy!"

Mrs. Van Buren put out her hand as a signal for him to wait. Sky-High did not understand, and the grace was concluded amid smiles.

Sky-High wondered much what had made the family sleepy at that time of the day. They did not go to sleep at the breakfast-table in China.

"The mistress and her people," said he to Nora, "shut their eyes and go to sleep at the breakfast."

"An' sure, it is quare you are yourself!

They were praying. Don't you ever say prayers, Sky-High?"

"My country has printed prayers," said Sky-High with lofty dignity.

"You're a hathen people. Here we call such as you a 'hathen Chinee,' and there was a Californan poet that wrote a whole piece about the likes of you. Children speak it at school. Here is the toast — carry it up!"

Lucy liked to see the little olive-colored "wang" moving about. One day at the table she requested him to bring her a cup of tea. The little Chinaman well knew that Lucy and Charles were not permitted to have tea. He inquired whether he should make it in the American or the Chinese way.

"In the way you would for a wang," said Lucy.

Sky-High soon re-appeared, his tray bearing a pretty little covered cup and a silver pitcher.

"Where is the tea?" asked Lucy.

"It is in the cup, like a wang's," said Sky-High.

He poured the hot water on the tea, and fragrance filled the room.

Lucy, with a glance asking her mother's leave, tasted the tea she had roguishly ordered.

"We do not have tea like this," she said; "is it tea?"

"Like a wang's," said Sky-High, blinking.

"Where did you get it?" asked Lucy.

"Out of my tea-canister," said Sky-High.

Little Lucy did not drink the tea, for little

Lucy had never drunk a cup of tea; but its fragrance lingered about the house through the day, and set her wondering what else the little Chinaman's immense trunk might hold.

It had been agreed between the Consul and Mrs. Van Buren that little Sky-High might talk with the family; and like her husband she found the Chinese boy "a new book." She asked him many a curious question about the "Flowery Kingdom," and one day she learned that "we never send our finest teas out of China." Yes "we" said the washee-washee-wang, as the neighbor-boys called him.

IV.

HOW SKY-HIGH CALLED THE GOVERNOR.

CHEERFULLY, in his fine blue linens, the little Chinese house-boy worked in his cabin a portion of every day. The bluebirds came close to sing to him and so did the red-breasted robins. Irish Nora and the parrot became very civil, and he grew fond of Charlie and Lucy.

Some of the boys on their way to and from school made his only real annoyance. Sometimes when his smoothing-iron was moving silently under his loose-sleeved hand, or he was hanging the snowy clothes on the lines, they would hide behind a tree or corner, and shy sticks at him calling, "washee-washee-wang!" He bore it all in an unselfish temper, until one day a big lump of dirt fell upon one of little Lucy's dainty muslin frocks as he was ironing it. Then he said something that sounded like, "cockle-cockle-cockle," and closed all the doors and windows.

At this crisis Charles and Lucy came to his side. They set wide again the doors and windows of the cabin under the green boughs, and promised him that they would forever be his

true friends and protectors. "It is time we began to treat him like a wang, as mother wished," said Lucy to Charlie.

"The American boys throw dirt at me in the street," admitted little Sky-High, in a reluctant tone — he did not like to bear witness against anyone in this sunshiny world.

"I will go out with you," said Charlie, "when you are sent out to do errands. I will stand between you and the dirt. The dirt comes out of their souls."

"And I will watch around the corners and speak to them," said Lucy.

Sky-high's heart bounded at these pledges of friendship, and he leaped about in a way that made the parrot laugh — sometimes he had the parrot in his cabin, and taught it Chinese words. "The sun shines for all, the earth blossoms for all," he said to the children; "it is only the heart that needs washee-washee and smoothee-smoothee. Everything will be better by and by. I talk flowery talk, like home, out here among the birds, butterflies, and bees."

(Nora said he "jabbered" all day long in the cabin.)

Mrs. Van Buren very soon promoted the careful little Chinaman to have all the care of the beautiful living rooms and the quaint old parlors. He brought the flowers and admitted the visitors. He did his work in admirable taste. It shed a kind of good influence through the house, to see the little fellow in his fine linens

flitting around, so careful was he to keep all things in speckless order.

The chief drawback was that he still used "flowery talk"; to him the world was a field of poetry, and he spoke in figures whenever he forgot himself. Mrs. Van Buren was still Madam the Mandarin, and he called Lucy the "Lotus of the Shining Sea." He received many reprimands for the use of these Oriental forms of speech; but found it hard to harness his thoughts to track-horses, especially after the June days began to fill the gardens with orioles and humming-birds and roses.

"Why not *let* me talk after nature?" little Sky-High used to beg.

One day the governor of the State came to visit the Van Burens. Sky-High spoke of him as the "Mandarin of the Golden Dome." He had several times been in Boston to see Consul Bradley, and knew the State House.

In the evening Mrs. Van Buren gave him his morning orders. "You will call the governor to-morrow at seven o'clock. You will knock on his door, and you must use plain language! You must not say, 'O Mandarin of the Golden Dome!' We do not use flowery terms of address in this country. Mind, Sky-High, use plain language."

The little Chinaman feared that he would be "flowery" in spite of all his care. So he consulted with Irish Nora in the blooming hours of the morning.

"What shall I say when I knock on the governor's chamber-door?" asked he earnestly. "What shall I say in the plain American language?"

"What shall you say? Say, 'Get up!'"

"Is that all?" asked he doubtfully.

"Well, if you want to say more, say, 'Get up! The world is all growing and crowing — the roosters are crowing their heads off!'"

Sky-High went to the door of the governor's room and knocked.

There came a voice from within. "Well?"

"Get up! The world is all growing and crowing, — the roosters are crowing their heads off."

The "Mandarin of the Golden Dome" did not wait for a second summons, but got up even as Sky-High had bidden him. It was a June morning, and he found the world as he had been warned, "all growing and crowing."

"Have you called the governor?" asked Mrs. Van Buren, as she met Sky-High on the stairs.

"Yes, my Lady of the Beautiful Morning."

"Did you use plain language?"

"Sky-High used the American language."

"What did you say?"

"I said, 'Get up!'"

"Oh, Sky-High, now I will have to apologize for you!"

"We never use plain language to mandarins in China," said Sky-High. "If we did, 'whish,

whish,' and our heads would be off before we could turn!"

The Mandarin of the Golden Dome came down from the chamber; and the Lady of the Beautiful Morning explained to him that her new boy had not yet mastered the arts of American manners, although he intended to be correct when addressing his superiors.

"I didn't notice anything whatever incorrect," said the governor, who had hugely enjoyed the manner of his summons. "He awoke me — what more was needed?"

V.

SKY-HIGH'S WONDER-TALE.

"My Lady of the Beautiful Morning" believed in the education of story-telling; and she did not limit her stories wholly to tales with "morals," but told those that awakened the imagination. This she did for Lucy's sake and Charlie's, believing that all little people should pass through fairyland once in their lives.

She used, like Queen Scheherazade of the Arabian Nights, to gather up stories that pictured places, habits, and manners of the people, to relate; and this year, when the garden began to flower, she had many such to tell under the trees. Sky-High was always a listener. He was always permitted to be with the family in the evening. He loved wonder-tales. They carried him off as on an "enchanted carpet."

One evening Mrs. Van Buren said, "I have a new idea. Sky-High might tell *us* some stories. He speaks English well when he chooses. Sky-High, tell us some tale of your own country. You have wonder-tales in China."

"In the stories of my country animals talk," said Sky-High.

"Tell us some of your stories in which animals talk," said Lucy, clapping her hands.

"Animals always talk, everywhere," said Sky-High. "In China we interpret what they say."

The word "interpret" was rather a big one for Lucy. But as Sky-High was given to using unexpected words, the little girl was herself beginning to indulge in a larger vocabulary.

So Sky-High began to relate an old Chinese household story.

The Self-Respecting Donkey.

There was once a Donkey who had great respect for himself, as many people do. Such wear good clothes. You may know what a man thinks of himself by the clothes he wears. We Chinese moralize in our stories as we go along. We tell *think*-tales.

One day the Self-respecting Donkey went out into some green meadows near a wood, and was eating grass when a Tiger appeared on the verge of the meadow. The Self-respecting Donkey was very much surprised, but did not lose his dignity. So he uttered a deep bray.

"Br-a-a-a!"

The Tiger, in his turn, was very much surprised — for the Donkey's voice seemed to penetrate the earth. But as soon as he collected his wits he crouched as if to spring upon the Donkey and make a meal of him.

The Self-respecting Donkey did not run. He moved with a slow, firm, and kingly step toward the Tiger. Then he dropped his head again, in such a way that his ears looked like great proclamations of wisdom and power.

"Br-a-a-a!"

His voice was truly terrible. The Tiger again quailed.

"Oh, Beast of the Voice of the Thunder-winds," said he, "thou canst dispute with me and the Lion the kingship among animals!"

The Donkey brayed again in a more terrible voice than before. "If you will accompany me into the wood," said he, "thou shalt see all animals flee from us."

The Tiger felt complimented by an association with the animal who had gained his voice from the thunder, and shortly they entered the wood.

The animals all fled when they saw them coming — not from the Donkey, but from the Tiger. Even the Raven dared not speak, and the Lion slunk back among the rocks; because a Tiger and a Donkey, together, might more than equal his terrifying roar.

"See," said the Donkey, "all nature flees before us. Now walk behind me, and I will show you the secret of my power."

The Tiger stepped behind; and the Donkey very quickly, in a pretty short time, showed him the secret of his power. He kicked the poor foolish Tiger in the head, breaking his nose, and stunning him. Then leaving him in the path for dead, he made good his escape.

"Any one can be great," said he, "if he knows how to use his power!" He was a philosopher.

When the poor Tiger came to his senses he rubbed his nose with his paw, and began to reflect on the lesson that he should learn from his association with a Donkey.

He reflected long and well — and never said anything about it to anyone.

"In my country," added little Sky-High, "we think that when one allows himself to get kicked by a donkey a long silence befits him — he can best show his wisdom in that way. Do you not think so, O Mandarin Americans?"

The "Mandarin Americans" quite agreed with the conclusion drawn by Sky-High.

It was about this time that little Lucy began to wonder if Sky-High were not a wang indeed. No common young Chinese could possess so many kinds of wisdom. He was able to read to her the labels on tea-chests, and to explain the odd figures on the many fans that decorated her playroom.

"How do you know so much, Sky-High?" she asked one day when he had told her the meaning of the pictures on an old Chinese porcelain in the upper hall.

"Many of the porcelains in our country are made to be read," he said. "All educated Chinese people can read porcelains. An American porcelain has no story."

VI.

THE MANDARIN PLATE.

AMONG the heirlooms to be found in the closets of many New England houses is a curious pattern of China plate. This plate is colored blue-and-white, and in the bowl of each is a picture. The picture represents a rural scene in China — a bridge on which are two young people, a man and a woman; a house, and a tree, and two birds of beautiful plumage flying away. Mrs. Van Buren had such a plate, and a platter with the same rural picture, on her dining-room wall.

It was the delight of Lucy to have Sky-High explain to her the meaning of the pictures on the Chinese vases and on an ornamental Chinese umbrella which hung in the reception-room. One day when Sky-High was dusting in the dining-room, Lucy's eye fell on the blue-and-white plate with the picture of the bridge and birds.

"Oh, Sky-High," said Lucy, "mother has a treasure here — a porcelain plate of your country, see!"

Sky-High looked up to the old porcelain.

He had seen such a plate a thousand times; so often, in so many places, that Mrs. Van Buren's had not drawn his eye.

"It is a mandarin plate," he explained to Lucy. "It has a magic power; it brings good luck. My people keep those plates for good fortune."

"A magic plate?" Lucy was all curiosity, now. "Tell me the story of the magic plate," she said. "Sit down and tell me. Who are the young people on the bridge? Begin."

"They are the same as the birds flying away. The birds and the young people are one."

Lucy's interest in the magic plate grew. Sky-High promised to tell her its legend at some time when her mother should be present.

Lucy went at once to her mother. "Oh, mother, we have a magic plate!"

"We have? Where?"

"It is the blue-and-white one over the sideboard."

"Oh! is that a magic plate? That was your grandmother's plate. Old families used to value that kind of ware from China — I do not know why."

"Come with me, and take it down, for Sky-High knows the story of the picture."

Mrs. Van Buren went in and took the plate down; and little Sky-High said, "It is the mandarin plate of our country. In the plate you cannot see the Good Spirit in the air, but it is there. This Good Spirit in the air changes

people into other forms when trouble comes, and they fly away."

"But what is the story?" asked Lucy.

"There was once a prince," said Sky-High, "whose name was Chang. He was a good prince; and there he is — the young man in the plate.

"And Prince Chang, the Good, loved a beautiful princess, as good as she was pretty; and there *she* is — the young woman in the plate.

"The prince and princess went to live on a beautiful isle, where was an orange-tree — see — and there was an old mandarin who lived near — see his house there — and he did not like the good prince and pretty princess when he saw how happy they were on the Isle of the Orange-tree.

"So he determined to separate them; and one day, when he was very full of dislike, he went towards the bridge that led to the Beautiful Isle to catch them. But something very wonderful happened."

"Oh, what *did* happen?" said Lucy. "I can hardly wait to learn."

"The Good Spirit of the air saw the grim old mandarin stealing away toward the bridge to cross to the Beautiful Isle of the Orange-tree, and he changed the prince and princess into two birds and they flew away. See them flying there at the top of the plate!"

"I will give you the plate," said Mrs. Van

Buren to Lucy; "for it was your grandmother's plate, and her name was Lucy, and she would be glad, were she living, to have you delight in a legend like that. It is good to think that a loving Spirit hovers over us when evil draws near us — I like the parable of the plate. I thank you for the story, Sky-High. Your country has good stories."

"The story of the mandarin plate," said the little Chinaman, "is also told in my country in a more tragic way; that the lovely girl is the mandarin's daughter, and that he slays the lovers, and that it is their souls that are seen flying away in the two birds. But it is the other story that our scholars like."

VII.

SKY-HIGH'S KITE.

CHARLES and Lucy wished to give Sky-High a surprise. They had come into possession of a kite which had been described to them as marvelous, and they got their mother's permission to take the little Chinaman to Franklin Park to see them fly it for the first time.

Franklin Park is not far from Milton Hill; and the street-cars readily carry the crowds of children to the pleasure-grounds of the immense common of woods, fields, great rocks and elms, and whole prairies of grass. It is quite free — the dwellers of close Boston and its bowery suburbs own the vast pleasure-place — the people could hardly have more privileges there did each one hold a deed of it. Little Sky-High thought this wonderful when it was explained to him.

The Van Burens had ample grounds of their own, but Mrs. Van Buren and the children liked to go to Franklin Park. Mrs. Van Buren liked to sit in the great stone Emerson arbor on Schoolmaster's Hill, and watch the white flocks of English sheep wander to and fro and

feed, guarded and guided by shepherd-dogs, and to gaze away in an idle reverie at the Blue Hills under the purple charm of distance.

No one jeered now when the Van Buren children appeared in the street with the little Chinaman. Nobody cried, "Rat-tail!" Nobody cried, "Washee-washee-wang!" He often rode with them in the carriage. People looked at him, to be sure, but only with interest — the fame of his accomplishments in the English language had gone abroad.

It was a beautiful early summer day, the white daisies waving in the west wind. Crossing the field, from a little green hill the children prepared to send up the new kite. Out of his narrow black eyes little Sky-High looked at it, as they took it from the package and sent it up. It seemed simply a frame-work, but presently the American flag rolled out in the sky, as though it hung alone, or had bloomed there.

Sky-High beheld it with pleasure. Great was America! He was contented to sit and watch it for hours, or as long as the children pleased. It was not until sunset that the starry kite was hauled down through the golden air, and Lucy and Charles prepared to return home.

On the way the little serving-man said, "I have a kite in my trunk. You let me fly it for you some day? You come with me here?"

So another breezy day the Van Buren children came to the Park with Sky-High. Lucy

danced about in the green world for very light-heartedness.

"You stay at the overlook," said Sky-High, pointing to the wild-flower embankment surrounded by burning azalias, "and I will show you how Chinese boys fly kites."

He had brought a thin package under his arm, and while Lucy and Charles waited at the embankment he ran like a thing of air out into the open field.

It was a glorious June day; and the great elms with their fresh young foliage were glimmering thick in the fiery sky, and like an emerald sea was the grass on the field, where hundreds of children were playing ball and other games.

Sky-High threw to the air a bundle of red with a few light angles and circles of bamboo, and it began at once to rise and expand. It went up into the mid-air, and fold after fold rolled out, and there appeared a great dragon.

All the children on the field stopped in their play to look up at it. The sun turned the dragon to intense red. To all appearance a terrible monster had taken possession of the air!

Suddenly the dragon wheeled about and went coiling along towards the overlook, Sky-High following and guiding its course. When it was just overhead it opened a great mouth, and smoke seemed to issue from it.

"Look out, little Lady of the Lotus," cried Sky-High merrily, "or it may swallow you!"

The little girl ran aside, but the dragon made no attempt to come down. When at a height some twenty feet above the earth it paused. Then suddenly, with a puff, it poured down a shower of flowers, butterflies, and gilded paper, like a gold shower. The air was full of them; they drifted here, there, and everywhere. All the children on the field ran to behold the wonder. Everybody shouted, and a great crowd of little people gathered around Sky-High to pick up the tissue flowers and butterflies.

"Ah," said the little Chinaman, "you ought to see him do that in the night, when all he sends down turns into fire!"

There never had been seen a kite like Sky-High's before. But the Chinese have been masters of kite-flying for more than two thousand years. Among their national festivals they have a kite-flying day.

Sky-High often came there with his magic kite. He became a very popular boy in the Park. The Boston boys said "Hello!" when they met him in his azure suit, quiet fun shining in his eyes. Lucy and Charles walked by his side with pride. They introduced him to all of their friends who asked it, and everybody spoke of him.

"Oh, he is such a gentleman, and so educated! Haven't you heard about him? He came to learn how to do business and understand our American homes. He will go back to his country and teach sometime. No doubt

a working-boy can rise in China the same as in our land!"

Lucy often begged her mother to let Sky-High wear his beautiful Chinese clothes to the Park — with his kite he would seem like a true enchanter! But Mrs. Van Buren strictly forbade.

VIII.

A WAN.

One day there was heard a tremendous explosion in the department of Sky-High. Mrs. Van Buren came running down-stairs. Lucy followed her, all eyes and ears. Irish Nora met them, running up-stairs. The kitten fled out, and jumped over the fence. The parrot was shrieking.

Above Sky-High's door, Mrs. Van Buren saw a strange black character on a big red paper. It was a square character and somewhat like a heavy "X" and also somewhat like a heavy "H."

Sky-High stood calmly ironing inside his little house at the end of the grape-arbor.

Nora followed her mistress to that abode of mystery.

"It's dynamated we are to be sure!" said she. "I shut my eyes and run, for I thought it was Sky-High that had gone off — but there he stood ironing! And there he stands now!"

"Sky-High," said Mrs. Van Buren, "what was that sound I heard?"

"Crackers, mistress."

"We are only allowed to fire crackers on holidays. Why did you light crackers?"

"To disperse the evil spirits, mistress, the dragons in the air, the imps. It is the way we serve them in China."

"There are no evil spirits here, Sky-High. What could have made you think that there were, Sky-High?"

"The cat — she is long bewitched after my queue. I fired the crackers to dis-power her — I saw her tail going over the fence! She is dis-possessed. She will not jump at Sky-High's queue any more. We shoot crackers in China when evil spirits come in the air. China is a spirit-land, mistress. Our air is filled with bright spirits and dark ones. When the cat begins to frisk its tail, we know there has come a company of evil spirits. The little cat's tail this morning went snap-snap!"

"Oh, Sky-High! there are no evil spirits in this blooming garden," said his mistress. "The little white cat is possessed by a playful spirit, perhaps. What is that strange figure in black on the red paper flag over the door?"

"That is the wan, mistress."

"And what is the wan, Sky-High?"

"The mystic sign that warns off evil spirits."

"Did I not say there are no evil spirits here?"

Here little Sky-High's eyes began to blink. "Why did master put a horse-shoe over the stable-door?"

Lucy looked up at her mother. And said Nora, "I would discharge that sassbox of a Chinese at once!"

"Have you more crackers, Sky-High?"

"In my chest, mistress."

"Keep them until the Fourth of July, Sky-High. At any time when you think there are evil spirits about, come up to me."

"May Sky-High let the wan fly over his door?"

"Yes," said Mrs. Van Buren; "while the horse-shoe remains over the stable to keep witches out, you may let the wan stay. You have as much right to your superstitions as we to ours."

Sky-High in a serene and beautiful spirit continued ironing.

Nora went back to her pantry. "It's not I that likes the foreign boy under the roof," she said. "He'll be convertin' the mistress into a haythen! It'll not be long I'll be here!"

Lucy sat down outside among the trees and birds and watched the wan waving gently in the wind. How neat Sky-High looked in his flowing dress of white and blue! She wondered again if he were not indeed a wang! After a while she made up her mind to relate a Jataka story that night.

The curious tales their little serving-man had told, he called Jataka legends — all of them parables to illustrate the teachings of the divine Buddha. (Also these tales had accounts

of mountains that were more than a million miles high, of trees that were a thousand miles tall, and of fishes that were thousands of miles long.)

These tales had enchanted Lucy, though Charlie cared little for them — he preferred to hear of kites and other Chinese games. But Lucy seemed to catch their spirit. And in the evening, when Sky-High sat with them under the trees or in the balconies, she often said, "Now tell us a Jataka story!"

But one night she had said instead, "Now let *me* tell *you* a Jataka story!"

The idea that Lucy had a Jataka story seemed to greatly amuse Sky-High. But the tale itself set his black eyes shining and blinking. This had been Lucy's tale:

"Sky-High, I dreamed that you were a wang and had lived in a palace."

To-day she sat a long time in the arbor to compose the tale she would tell in the evening when they would be on the veranda, with Sky-High on the stair at their feet.

So in the evening she said, "I have composed another Jataka story. Would you like to hear it, mother? Would you, Sky-High?"

IX.

LUCY'S JATAKA STORY.

Now the little Chinaman began his stories with words like these, for most Jataka stories so begin·

"Once upon a time in the days of Buddha Atta in Benares."

To-night Lucy began her tale in nearly the same manner — the words sounded so fine.

"Once on a time, *after* the days of Budda-Atta in Benares, there was a little Chinese boy who was born a wang, which is a king. And they called him Wang High-Sky.

"And he lived in a palace, and the stairs of the palace were golden amber, and the windows were of crystal, and all the knives and forks were made of pearl and silver.

"And they told little Wang High-Sky that there were countries beyond the water, also.

"And the little Wang High-Sky said, 'Let me go and see. There may be something I can learn in other lands. There may be queer people there — if so, I would never laugh at them. Let me go and see how they live!'

"And they put him on board a dragon boat,

with lanterns of silver and pearls, and with sails of silk, and carried him to the great hotel on the water, that had come from other lands, which was called a ship. For there truly were people beyond the water.

"And little Wang High-Sky was a very bright boy. He had a diamond in his brain. So he found a place to live in an awfully good family, and in the family was a little girl named Lucy.

"And he worked and worked and worked until he could do all things like the good family.

"And one day he thought he would go home to his palace with stairs of golden amber and windows of crystal.

"And Lucy thought she would like to see the people in little Wang's country.

"And Lucy's father and mother said they would take her to the country of little Wang when he went back.

"And she went to little Wang's country, and she found the trees there a hundred miles high, and the fishes two hundred miles long, and horses winged with gold as if just about to fly, and they staid and kept house in Wang High-Sky's palace two thousand years.

"And she and her father and mother and brother were very joyful when they all came back.

"And in their own country they found that every one had become rich and happy, and that

people flew about like birds, and that the sun shone in the night. And!" she added, "isn't that a Jataka story?"

Lucy's mother seemed much pleased, also astonished; but Sky-High said nothing for some time.

"Do you think me a wang?" asked he, at last.

"I wish you were — oh, how Charlie and I would dance about if you were! I think the everyday boys in China cannot be like you. And I do not think you ironed clothes in China. I wish you *were* a king's son!"

"And what if I were?"

"Oh — I don't know," laughed little Lucy. "Don't we treat you as well as if you were? Ladies and gentlemen treat ladies and gentlemen like wangs in America. Don't we, mother?"

"I trust so. I trust our little Sky-High has found it so," answered Lucy's mother.

"So would Sky-High treat you were you to come to his home," said the little Chinaman.

"But you have no home, Sky-High," broke in Charlie. "You said you lived with a mandarin!"

The little Chinaman, who had a beautiful fan in his hand, for it was a hot night, made his mistress and her children a bow of indescribable grace, and went to his own quarters.

X.

SKY-HIGH'S EASTER SUNDAY.

THE little Chinaman seemed to make no very great task of learning "the art of the American home." His small deft olive hand was more or less upon everything, from cellar to attic.

"*I* think our house-boy knew how to keep a house beautiful, mother, before he came to our country," said Lucy one day.

"Well, perhaps he *was* a wang," said her mother, "and *did* live in a palace!"

"Doesn't Mr. Consul Bradley know about him, mother?"

"Consul Bradley says Sky-High's father is a good man, and that Sky-High is a good boy with a bright mind. Of course, Lucy, there are nice Chinese people and nice Chinese homes."

Certainly the little house-boy was wonderfully energetic. He was able to save every Thursday for himself, and always went into Boston on that day and, as Mrs. Van Buren learned, visited the consular office.

One day Mrs. Van Buren asked, "What do you do all day in town, Sky-High?"

"I see Boston, mistress."

"And what is it you see?"

"The American stores, mistress, and the American little Kinder-schools, and the American great college-schools, and the American railcar shops, and the American hotels, and the American markets, and the Americans, mistress."

"And who goes with you on these visits, Sky-High?"

An attack of blinking seized little Sky-High. "The consul, he goes."

Mrs. Van Buren drove into town next day. While there she made a call upon the Chinese consular agent. Lucy was with her. Consul Bradley appeared to have little fresh information to give.

"The boy's father is a good man," he said. "Like the wise fathers everywhere he craves knowledge for his son. I promised him Sky-High should see something of Boston, and I do for him all I can."

"Mother," said Lucy on the way home, "we might be nicer to Sky-High. Listen!"

Her mother listened to Lucy's plan, and gave permission.

When Lucy got home she said to Sky-High, "We want you to go to church with us; and Charlie and I want you to go with us to our Sunday school. There are Chinese Sunday schools in Boston, but we wish you to be in ours."

"I will have to wear my queue, and my flowing clothes, Lucy," said the boy.

"But, Sky-High, you can braid your braid close, and wind it around your head, and put on your black tunic, and you shall sit in our pew. Besides, anyway, it would be proper for a person of China to wear his braid down his back after the custom of his country."

"You speak as kindly as would the daughter of a wang!" said Sky-High, with his beautiful bow of ceremony.

On Sunday the little Chinaman dressed his hair becomingly and put on black clothes, with white ruffles. He sat in the Van Buren pew, beside Charlie. He listened to the organ like one entranced. It was Easter Day, and the house was full of the odor of lilies. The text for the service was these words of Jesus: "*If any man keep my sayings he shall never see death.*"

The "Joss preacher," as he called the minister, came and spoke to him, and invited him to go into the Sunday-school room.

In the evening he made Chinese tea, and served it in the library, and afterward sat with the family.

Suddenly he said, "Mistress, what were the 'sayings' of Jesus? Sky-High wishes to live on forever."

Mrs. Van Buren read the Beatitudes.

"And what is the heaven, mistress?"

"Sky-High," said Mrs. Van Buren, very

earnestly, to her little servant, "I scarcely know how to tell you what heaven is, only that we surely have a part in its building here by our Loving and our Helping here. You know how dear it is to be with those you love, you know how pleasant it is to meet again those you have helped. That is the law of the soul. God loves and helps us, and will rejoice in having us abide with him, and that will make us happy; and all whom we have made better and happier here will help make our heaven for us. Heaven is the gladness of Loving and Helping as nearly as I know."

"That heaven — it is beautiful, mistress," said little Sky-High. In his own country, it had been pleasant music to hear the "prayer-wheels" go round in the temples, whirling the paper prayers fastened upon them, but the pleasure he felt at this moment was different.

"I will help many, mistress," he said. "Perhaps Sky-High will help the boys that pull his queue on the street when he goes errands to the stores. Sky-High will go with his mistress and her children other Sundays, if he may. Good-night, mistress!"

So ended the Easter Sunday of the little Chinaman.

XI.

SKY-HIGH'S FIREWORKS.

One June evening, in the balcony, when Sky-High inquired about American holidays, Mrs. Van Buren related to him the story of Washington and of the American Independence. She enlivened her narratives by Weems's story of the boy Washington and the hatchet.

"He never told a lie?" asked Sky-High. "Was that so wonderful? Confucius, he tell no lies; Sky-High, he tell no lies."

Mrs. Van Buren described to him Independence Day, and how it was celebrated. Sky-High asked many questions, and began to look forward to the celebration.

On the morning of the Fourth the sun came up red, and glimmered on the cool sea and dewy trees. To Sky-High the air seemed to blossom with flags; the far State House dome rose like an orb of gold above the bunting that floated over the great forest of Boston Common.

Cannon rent the morning silence, and everywhere there were crackers bursting. Even the milkmen fired them as they went on their early way.

Sky-High danced about. "You have Cracker Day! It is all same as China!" he said.

Some of the Milton boys who had many bunches of fire-crackers, good-naturedly thought they would startle little Washee-washee-wang at his work. So they stole around a corner of the garden, where he was busy in his neat little cabin, and "lit" a whole bunch and threw it over the fence, at a point where all would "go off" right at his door, then threw after it two cannon crackers, whose fuses burned slowly.

When the small crackers began to explode Sky-High, to whom the noise was like music, came and stood in the door and danced with delight.

Irish Norah heard the rattling explosions in the garden, and ran out.

"China! China!" shouted Sky-High. "Red crackers make the bad spirits fly! The garden all free from evil spirits all day."

Just then both of the cannon crackers in the grass "went off," with a deafening bang. Norah jumped, and put her fat hands to her ears. But little Sky-High clapped his after the American fashion. His delight in the racket and in the smell of the gunpowder was so intense, that Charlie forebore to go out on the street, but staid in and fired his immense supply in front of the cabin.

In the evening there were fireworks everywhere, small and great. The children and Sky-High went up to a turret overlooking the

sea. The sky over the towns around Boston blazed.

"I will show you something fine," suddenly said Sky-High, after he had gazed for some time.

He went down and unlocked his great chest. He spoke to Mrs. Van Buren's friends on the verandah as he came back. "Sky-High, he is going to fire a star! Look this side!"

He called to all as he "fired the star." The company saw a dark, swift object ascending. It was soon lost to sight, and then appeared a wonder — a new star high in the heavens, that burned a long time with a steady flame and grew. How beautiful it was! At last it began to descend. When near the earth it burst into a hundred stars of seven colors. In all Boston there was no firework as wonderful as Sky-High's.

The day after he began to inquire about the next American holiday.

Mrs. Van Buren told him about Thanksgiving Day. Then she told him of Christmas, and how the Christmas festival was kept. She related the story of the birth of the Christ Child, and of the Bethlehem star, of the singing angels in the sky, of the Magi, and the manger; of the presents of gold and myrrh and nard. She told him how that now all people of "good will" made presents to each other like the magi to the Christ Child.

"So will Sky-High make you presents on the

Christ Child day, then. He has good will. You have treated him as though he were no servant but a prince."

Charlie and Lucy told him of the Christmas-tree, and the plays under the misletoe. Their mother ordered misletoe from Florida every year, for Christmas decorations, from a plantation which their father owned near Tampa, a plantation of grape-fruit groves. She had a mistle-thrush among her caged birds, that always sang very sweetly when she hung it under the newly-gathered waxy misletoe.

From that time on, the little Chinaman dreamed of Christmas. One day he said to Mrs. Van Buren, "You will surely let Sky-High come up-stairs on the night of the Christmas-tree?"

"Yes, yes, you shall come up-stairs with us, and you shall hear the Christmas thrush sing under the misletoe."

Sky-High's heart fluttered, not at what he hoped to see, but at the thought of the presents that he hoped to make.

Shortly before Christmas Mrs. Van Buren went to her little servant to pay him his wages, for he had accepted no payment as yet.

"Keep it all for me," he said, as usual; "I will ask for it when I need it."

Mrs. Van Buren was very much surprised. "Young people in this country," said she, "think they need a little money before Christmas day to buy presents."

"Sky-High needs none. He will make you presents on the Christ Child day. He has them now in his chest."

Mrs. Van Buren could not but wonder what the presents would be. Everything that Sky-High did had a surprise in it. All things that came out of the chest were of an astonishing character.

"And I will serve you the tea that you have not yet tasted," added the little servant. "On the Christ Child night I will make in the cup the tea that came from the eyelashes of the Dharma. And afterwards I will tell you the story of the Dharma."

Again, a day or two before the holiday of Good Will, Sky-High's mistress asked him to take his wages.

"Keep it for me, mistress," said the boy as before. "Sky-High, he works for the good of his people."

Mrs. Van Buren stood pondering the words. What meant the little Washee-washee-wang?

"Mistress," said the boy, busy folding the glossy napkins on the ironing table, "the master plans to make a voyage around the world with his family."

"Yes, Sky-High," said Mrs. Van Buren, "that the children may see the world before they begin to study about it."

"And you will come to my country, mistress?"

"Yes; we hope to visit at least Hong Kong and Canton, Shanghai and Pekin."

"You will wish to see the home of Sky-High, mistress."

"Yes, we would like to see you in your own country."

"When will the master go?"

"Next year, probably."

"Sky-High will go home next year. Will you let him go with you, mistress? He will serve you on the ships, and in China he will make your visit pleasant. He will interpret for you, and show you about, and introduce you about."

Mrs. Van Buren was too kind to let her astonishment be seen by her little serving-man. She said that possibly it might be so arranged.

As she went up-stairs she heard Nora exclaiming to herself in the pantry. "And he says he'll inthroduce the misthress about, and the misthress is narely as quare!"

After supper Mrs. Van Buren related to her husband the singular interview she had had with their little Chinaman. Sky-High's kind offers seemed to amuse him for a long time. "But as for the little fellow's wages," said he, "don't bother. I'll step in to the consul's, and deposit them with Bradley."

When Sky-High found that he was serving to amuse his mistress's household, he turned silent. He worked, asking few questions, and listened to even the children without answering them.

This disturbed Charlie and Lucy.

"See here, Sky-High, can't you take a joke?" demanded Charlie.

"Sky-High no joke with the mistress. Sky-High no make a lie!" said the patient Chinaman; "Sky-High, his heart is hurt."

XII.

A CHINESE SANTA CLAUS.

THE day before Christmas Lucy came to her mother with a request. "Just one thing, mother! And it isn't more presents — the Good Will tree hangs full!"

"Well, then, what is it, Lucy?" asked Mrs. Van Buren.

Little Lucy laughed. "A Chinese Santa Claus, mother! Think what a Santa Claus Sky-High would make in his flowing robes of black, yellow, and white all sprinkled over with silver and gold! Nearly all the gifts are Chinese, you know — all but ours for him. Just remember how he looked last summer on Sunday afternoons when the birds flew down to admire him!"

Yes, the birds seemed to have felt a curiosity about the little Chinaman when he went out into the garden with the children after Sunday luncheon; for sometimes, on that day, he used to put on garments so splendid that he did not like to show himself above stairs or on the street, and the birds came out of the

trees to take a peep at him. One of these garments was a frock of silk covered with golden dragons, lotus-flowers, and gilded fringes; and with it he wore a golden butterfly with jeweled wings on his rimless cap.

Even Mr. Van Buren had wondered where a servant obtained such a glittering robe! One day he described the wardrobe of his house-boy to the consul. "Is everything all right?" he asked.

The consul laughed. "You don't know China!" he said. "Probably the old Manchurian mandarin had a fancy for decking out the boy!"

Nora's eyes used to double in size when she saw him in silk and gold and silver, with the jeweled butterfly waving above his narrow black eyes. "There's not the loikes on this planet," she would say. "I would think he'd stepped off a star and landed here! Queen Victory never looked the aqual of that little hathen varmit!"

It was agreed that Sky-High should be made the Santa Claus of the Christmas party. He promised to appear in his dragon robe, though he said it was never worn in public excepting on vice-royal occasions.

"Sky-High, did you ever see a vice-royal occasion?" asked Lucy, wondering what the double word meant.

"Yes, my little Lady of the Lotus," answered the house-boy. "And once I was present on a

royal occasion in Pekin. The Son of Heaven appeared that day in all his splendor."

"You waited on your mandarin?" asked Lucy.

"I attended upon my mandarin — yes?" Little Sky-High burst forth into the forbidden "flowery language." "It was in the Purple City. Barbarians cannot understand; but in our court, in the Inner City, in the ancient Purple City, we associate with the Sun and Moon and the Dragon that swallows the Sun. The Sacred Lotus is our flower, and at the feast the heavens are made to shine on us!"

Lucy's face shone too, just to hear the words of the mysterious little "Washee-washee-wang," — in fact she had been radiant ever since she had first thought of making a Santa Claus of him. She wondered how he would look to her mother's friends on Christ Child night, wearing his "celestial" robes.

The children were to have their own tree on Christmas eve, at the church among the evergreens and music, and Sky-High was to accompany them in his black clothes and white ruffles. The Christmas night tree was always at home, for Mrs. Van Buren and her friends.

Little Lucy was to lead the Christmas night jollities, and only the Santa Claus himself knew what would follow the wave of the long Chinese wand which she carried.

The guests gathered early — half a dozen ladies — for it was to be a story-telling evening.

Promptly at the moment when Lucy waved for him, little Sky-High came into the parlors fanning slowly with his great ceremonial fan, as if entering some languid pagoda garden of his native land. Every guest leaned forward to gaze at the gorgeous stranger. His silk stockings were white, over black shoes with silver buckles and whitened soles. His robe sparkled gaily with the dragon and lotus, and the butterfly on his gold-banded cap shook its jeweled wings with every step. He wore a sash of gems which the family had not seen before. He moved before the company like a figure of sunshine.

Little Lucy had come to his side. "I have the great felicity," she began — she had got the fine word from Sky-High — "to have a celestial Santa Claus, a wang from China, to serve you the gifts from the Good Will tree."

The glittering wang bowed to the four corners of the earth, then to all, turning round and round in dazzling circles.

No, Mrs. Van Buren's Christmas guests had never seen a Santa Claus like this one! All eyes were wide with pleased wonder.

"Isn't he perfectly splendid?" whispered Lucy, tripping over to the wife of the rector.

"He is indeed, dear," said the rector's wife; and added low, to her neighbor, "Is it not their wonderful house-boy?"

No one was certain. And no one, excepting Lucy and the Santa Claus, knew what were the

gifts on the Good Will tree. Lucy and little Sky-High had bought them in Boston. All those for the guests were blue-and-white mandarin plates, wrapped in squares of gay silk crape, and tied with a profusion of soft gold cord. As the packages were alike, the celestial Santa Claus could present them without mistakes.

But there were some packages in red-and-gold crape still on the tree, not large ones — not magic plates, certainly.

The Santa Claus unwrapped the three which he next took from the green branches. The presents were amulets. When unfolded they revealed bells and gems; the bells looked like gold; the gems like pure pearls, opals, and crystals. One was a necklace for Mrs. Van Buren; one a bracelet for Lucy; and the other a charm for Charles.

The amulets awakened a great surprise. The little golden bells burned with the red lusters of rubies, and tinkled as though they were dream-bells.

"They keep evil spirits away," said Sky-High, with sparkling eyes. "They ring warnings."

Mrs. Van Buren rose and put one of the other packages in little Sky-High's hand. The wrappings revealed a four-fold case of gold, which some curious mechanism permitted to open into leaves, and stand as a tablet, or half-closed. Each leaf held a small and perfect portrait — the four were of the little serving-man's

mistress and her children and the master; and it is impossible to describe the blissful expression in Sky-High's eyes when he first looked upon the familiar faces.

And there was still another package. That one the little Chinaman had put on the Good Will tree for Nora.

It was an English gold sovereign in a case tied with red ribbon.

"And may the Angel of Mercy spread her white wings over that hathen boy's pigtail!" said Nora, as she was given the gift. "I wish I had something for him. I will give him kind words now, and sure!"

XIII.

A LEGEND OF TEA.

At a wave of little Lucy's wand the shining, golden Santa Claus floated away as he came. When he next appeared — and it seemed but a moment or two after — he bore a salver that was gorgeous to see. Upon it, sending up clouds of steam, was a wonderfully beautiful pitcher that his mistress never before had seen, encircled by some exquisite small black cups, inlaid and encrusted heavily with gold, each with a perforated cover.

"Sky-High presents to his mistress, the Moon Lady of the Christ Child Night," the little fellow said in his best flowery English, "and to her friends, the Stars of the Midnight, the mandarin tea in the mandarin cups of his country — they will please to be accepted from the Santa Claus."

From the pitcher he poured the bubbling water in the mandarin cups, when an exquisite fragrance filled the rooms, as of apple-blossoms.

While the guests sipped the priceless tea from the priceless cups, at the request of his mistress the little Chinaman related a Buddhist legend.

THE DHARMA'S EYELASHES.

More than four hundred and a thousand years ago, O Madame my Mistress, the great Dharma came to China to teach the people. He ate only fruits, and he slept but little; he gave his time almost entirely to meditation.

The Dharma ate less and less, and slept less and less, and all things were beginning to appear clear to him within, when a drowsiness came over him, and it increased day by day.

One day his eyelashes became too heavy for his eyes; they hung like little weights on his eyes, and he fell asleep.

He awoke after a long time. The inner light had gone. He felt that he had committed a great sin.

"It is you, my little eyelashes," he said, "that weighed me down, and I will punish you. I will cut you off."

Then the great Dharma cut off the little black eyelashes, and strewed them upon the ground. As he did so he had the inward light again.

He meditated. As he did so the little eyelashes on the ground turned into wee shrubs, and began to grow.

They were tea.

The Dharma ate the tea. The shrub filled his heart with joy and gladness. So tea came into the world. Drink it — it will fill your heart with joy and gladness.

The Rector's wife gave the Santa Claus a seat by her side that he might share with the company the pleasure of the Good Will story his mistress was next to relate; and little Lucy, too, and Charlie came and sat near-by, for they loved their mother's stories, and could always understand them.

XIV.

MRS. VAN BUREN'S CHRISTMAS TALE.

THE most beautiful story Mrs. Van Buren had found in her search during the year for a tale to tell her friends around the Good Will tree was one in the German tongue. She had translated it during the summer, and now called it by a title of her own as she told it.

RED MANTLE, THE HOUSE SPIRIT.

There was a German pedler who traveled from city to city by the name of Berthold. He grew in wealth, and at last carried portmanteaus of jewels of great value. He usually traveled only in the daytime, and so as to arrive early in the evening at the town inns between the Hartz Mountains and the Rhine.

But on one journey he was belated. He found himself in an unknown way in a great fir forest, where the dark pines shut out the lamps of the stars. He began to fear, for the forests were reputed to be infested with robbers, when suddenly a peculiar light appeared. It was a fire that fumed with a steady flame; he perceived it was a charcoal pit.

The colliers are honest people, he reasoned; and with a light step he approached the pit.

Near-by was a long house, two stories high, and the lower windows were bright with the candles and fire within.

He approached the house, and knocked upon the door.

The door was opened cautiously by a middle-aged woman, with a bent form and beautiful, but troubled face.

"What would thee have, stranger?"

"Food and lodging, madam."

"That can never be — not here, not here. It distresses me to say it, but it would not be for your comfort to tarry here."

"But I am belated, and have lost my way. I must come in."

"I will call my husband. Herman, come here!"

She stepped aside, when an elderly man appeared, holding a light shaded by his hand, and followed by a group of children.

"I am a belated traveler," said he to Herman, the collier, "and I have lost my way. I see that you are an honest man, and I may tell you that I have merchandise of value, and so it is not safe for me to go on. Give me a shelter and a meal, and I will pay for all."

"It is loath I am to turn away a stranger, but this is no place for a traveler. The house is haunted, yet it will not be so always, I hope; but it is so now."

"But, good man, I am not afraid."

"You do not know, stranger."

"But I can sleep where you can, and where this good woman can live with her innocent children."

"You don't know," said the woman. "You don't know."

"But I must rest here. There may be thieves without, wolves. There cannot be worse things within. I must come in, and I will."

Berthold forced his way into the house, and sat down near the fire, laying his portmanteau near him.

The family were silent, and looked distressed. But the woman set before him a meal.

"Let us sing," said the collier at last.

He turned to a table where were musical glasses,

and began to play. How sweet and delicate, like an angel's strain, the music was! Then he began to sing with his family:

"Now the woods are all sleeping,
O guard us, we pray!"

The merchant thought that he had never listened to anything so beautiful.

After the old German song, Herman said:

"Let us pray — will you kneel with us, traveler? You may have need of our prayers, for you have come in to us at your peril."

Much astonished at these words, the merchant knelt down beside his portmanteau. The collier began to pray, when there was a light sound at the storm-door, and a draft of wind stirred the ashes.

The merchant turned his face towards the door.

A strange sight met his gaze, such as he had never seen before. A little dwarf stood there with eyes like coal and with a red mantle. He moved the door to and fro. His eyes gleamed. He looked like a burning image. At last, swaying the door, he gave the merchant an evil glance that seemed to burn out his very soul, and was gone.

The prayer ended, and the family rose from their knees.

"I will now show you to your chamber," said the collier; "but before we go up, listen to me. If you do not think one evil thought or speak one evil word during the night, no harm will befall you. Promise me now that you will not think one evil thought or speak one evil word, whatever may befall you."

"I promise you, good people, that I will try not to think one evil thought or to speak one evil word, whatsoever may befall me."

"And you must not give way to anger; if you do, anger is fire, and he will grow!" said the collier.

The collier led the merchant up the stairs to his room and left him there, saying, "Remember."

The moon shone into the room. The Swiss cuckoo clock struck ten — eleven — twelve. The merchant could not sleep. He was haunted by the fiery eyes that he had seen at the storm-door.

Suddenly the door of his own chamber opened, and a red light filled the room. The same dwarf with the red mantle had entered the chamber and was approaching the bed.

The merchant had laid his portmanteau of jewels upon the foot of the bed, with the straps hanging over the bedside. He put his foot down under the clothes so as to touch the case.

The light grew brighter, and advanced nearer. Now the dwarf stood full in view, his eyes flashing, and his feet moving as cautiously, his head now and then turned aside, and his hands lifting the red mantle.

He came to the foot of the bed, and stood there for a time. The merchant grew impatient, and felt his anger rising.

The dwarf turned away his flaming eyes from him and began to handle the straps of the portmanteau of jewels.

The merchant's anger at the annoyance grew, and became uncontrollable.

"Avaunt!" cried he with terrible oath, leaping from the bed.

The dwarf stood before him and began to grow. He shot up at last into a flame, and stretched out his arms. He was a giant.

"Help! help!" cried the merchant.

There was a sound in the rooms below. The red giant reeled through the door and down the stairs and out into the night.

The collier came running up the stairs.

"What, what," he demanded, "have you been doing to our House Spirit?"

"To your House Spirit?"

"Yes, he has just gone out; he is a giant again!"

The good wife was following her husband, and wailing.

"Now we will have to live him down again; oh, woe, woe; this is an evil night; we will have to live him down again."

"Stranger," said the collier, "these things may seem strange to you, but when we came here our lives were haunted by the red giant that has gone out into the wood. We knew not what to do, but we sent for the old pastor, and he said: 'Good forester, you can live him down. Think only good thoughts, speak only good words, do only good deeds, and he will become smaller and smaller, less and less. Harbor no evil-minded person in your house You may one day live him out of sight, and change him into an angel.' We had almost lived him down!"

"But what was he?" asked the merchant.

"He was our Visible Temptation."

In the morning the merchant hurried away.

Ten years passed. The merchant chanced to travel through the same forest again. Night was coming on, and he recalled the collier's house.

He went to it again. He knocked and an old man met him at the door.

"Thou art welcome," said the old man. "We are not forgetful to entertain strangers. What wouldst thou?"

"Supper and lodging," said the merchant.

"They shall be yours. We offer hospitality to all."

He was Herman, the collier. He did not recognize the merchant.

The old woman — for she was now gray — set before him an ample supper. The children had grown to be young men and women.

The cuckoo clock struck the hour of nine.

The collier altered the musical glasses.

"Will you join with us in singing?" asked he of the traveler.

The family sang as before the old German hymn:

"Now the woods are all sleeping.
Guard us we pray."

"Let us pray now," said the collier.

They knelt; the merchant by his portmanteau as before.

He watched the storm-door. It did not open. But he became conscious of light overhead. He looked up. A star was forming there. Then a face of light on whose forehead gleamed the star.

Then wings of pure light were outstretched above the family.

"Amen," said the collier.

The light over him vanished.

The collier's family had lived down the demon, and changed him into an angel.

The Christmastide passed, but for days afterward the story of the forest family that lived down all the evil in them and turned it into an angel, haunted the mind of little Sky-High.

"I will tell that story, mistress," he said one day, "at the Feasts in my Country of the Crystal Sea."

"And to whom will you tell it, Sky-High?" asked Mrs. Van Buren.

"The Mandarin of the Crystal Sea is not deaf, mistress. Sky-High will tell it to him."

XV.

IN THE HOUSE—BOY'S CARE.

Lucy and Charles were full of joy when it was fully decided that they were to be taken on a voyage around the world. They spent whole evenings with Sky-High, tracing the route on the maps and globes. They would go by the way of San Francisco or Vancouver, and thence to Canton. They were to visit Sky-High's land first of all.

"They're all gone mad sure!" said Nora; "and that boy'll never send 'em back!"

Mr. Van Buren wished to learn something of the Chinese language as spoken, and was willing to study an hour every evening with the house-boy, and Lucy and Charles picked up the funny choking phrases as fast as their father.

Mr. Van Buren said that Manchuria, the land of the conquering Tartars, was likely to play a notable part in the history of the future in connection with the great Siberian railway; and the whole family began to take an interest in the history and condition of that vast province on the Ameer, where little Sky-High had lived.

Mrs. Van Buren read aloud to them all the story of Kubla Khan and of Tamerlane, and of Marco Polo, the great traveler, and about the Mongols, the Buddhist missionaries, the Great Wall, the long periods of peace and temple building. They studied the maxims of Confucius and the accounts of modern missionaries.

For Charles and Lucy to hear these stories of the country that had given the world fire-crackers and silk, and was, moreover, the land of their dear little Sky-High, was like listening to the "Arabian Nights." The winter passed away quickly, delightful with their preparations for the great journey.

"You said that you had lived with the mandarin of Manchuria, I think," remarked Mr. Van Buren to Sky-High one evening.

"With *a* mandarin in Manchuria, master," corrected Sky-High. "There are many mandarins in Manchuria. Manchuria is a large country."

"Are there more people than in Boston?" asked Charlie.

"I do not know how many there are in Boston — there are fifteen million in the province of Manchuria."

"Did the mandarin live in great, wonderful, gorgeous splendor?" asked Lucy.

Sky-High's eyes opened with a gleam. "His gifts are gold," he said. "His dragons have teeth of gold. The monoliths in his garden are one thousand, it may be two thousand years old

At the Feast of Lanterns he covers the sky over his palace with fire. You should see his gardens and the gables of his houses! It takes some minutes to speak his whole name."

"I wish I could look upon a man like that!" said Charlie. "I hope we shall see that mandarin when we go to China."

"That will be easy," said Sky-High.

The family sailed away from the Pacific coast in the spring. Mr. and Mrs. Van Buren really felt very glad to have such an intelligent servant as Sky-High for their visit to the Chinese provinces, even though they were to leave him behind at his home.

When they arrived at Hong Kong there was a surprise. Some officials at the port appeared to recognize Sky-High, and brought to him an important-looking mail which he received with a sudden dignity. He also was paid attentions from notable Chinese people, such as servants would not seem likely to meet.

Mr. Van Buren finally explained it to himself. He carried letters to many consuls and commercial houses. Sky-High was noticed because he was in his service. "In such countries," said Mr. Van Buren, "customs are different from ours."

Certain high Chinamen in the hongs — the trade-houses — bowed low in a most respectful way to Sky-High, their manner very noticeable. Whenever Lucy and Charles accompanied him

they were offered Chinese sweetmeats or novel toys of ivory and jade.

"The people are very kind and polite to you," said Mr. Van Buren to Sky-High, one day. "You are fortunate to come back in our service. Our family has traded with China for three generations; I suppose we are known nearly everywhere."

"I am fortunate, master," said the little Chinaman.

They prepared to go on to Canton. Sky-High arranged the journey, and explained the details to Mr. Van Buren. He had an air of taking the family under his protection, and seemed to be wholly familiar with the way along the boat-lined waters.

"We are to stop just before we reach the city," he said to Mr. Van Buren, "to meet a mandarin of Manchuria of the Crystal Sea. He is visiting at the summer palace of a grand mandarin of Canton. A barge will come out to meet us. There will be fireworks. I have arranged it all. Besides these two there will be also a mandarin from the Yellow River."

"'Meet us! I have arranged it all!' What does our little house-boy mean?" thought Mr. Van Buren. He called Sky-High, and asked him to explain his strange words.

"I have arranged it all," said Sky-High simply. "A barge will meet you, and take you to this summer palace. There will be fireworks for the sake of Charles and Lucy; the heavens

will blaze. The mandarins have heard of your family. They wish to receive you and to please the children of the mandarin of Boston."

Lucy danced at these hospitable words. She had treated little Sky-High like a wang. She had dreamed that he was a wang. Perhaps — well, little Lucy found it thrilling to feel that almost anything splendid might happen!

But Mr. Van Buren had no idea that his family had become of importance to the grandees of China, although it was true that his father and grandfather had traded in the country and had extensive correspondence with the hongs. "Sky-High," said he, "you must be simply amusing yourself! A grand mandarin would not order fireworks for Charles and Lucy. What mandarin is he?"

"Of the Crystal province. He has heard of you; he wishes to honor you as a noble American and the friend of his people."

Mr. Van Buren wondered if his wife's little house-boy had gone insane. He spoke with impatience. "Let us not be fooling ourselves with this business any longer!"

"I have never deceived you, master," said the little serving-man. "I am as the great George Washington in his youth. The mandarin of the province of the Crystal Sea holds you in high esteem, and he wishes to entertain the children."

Mr. Van Buren inquired at the American consular office concerning this "Mandarin of the province of the Crystal Sea." The consul

informed him, with a smile, that the mandarin in question was especially rich and powerful, that he took an interest in American manners and customs, and often entertained Americans who had been kind to his people in America as well as merchants who had dealt honorably with the Chinese.

Still, Mr. Van Buren could not understand how a great and high-born mandarin should be in communication with his servant.

Here little Lucy spoke up. "Papa, I *know* it is all *so!* Our Sky-High has never told a lie. Even General George Washington would have liked him."

XVI

IN THE LITTLE WANG'S LAND.

THE family set out for Canton under the direction of their little servant, whose heart seemed full of anticipation and delight.

The boat stopped when some distance still from the city. A gilded barge with a dragon's head and silken curtains had come to meet them. Not far away they saw a landing, with boats and people.

"You are to wait for me here," said little Sky-High, as he went aboard the barge. "I will return soon."

Gongs sounded, banners waved, as the gilded boat made its way through the river craft. Mr. Van Buren could see a row of sedan chairs standing upon the landing, gorgeous in gilded frames and silk curtains, with bearers and servants in rich costumes. Presently, among these people they saw their little Sky-High approach a tall man, who seemed to be a master of ceremonies, when the gongs were again beaten.

"Well, this is growing somewhat remarkable!" said Mr. Van Buren. "Yes, even if the boy is returning from America with Ameri-

cans whose name is noted in the commerce of the country!"

Sky-High returned; the family went aboard the cushioned boat, and at the landing were assisted into the sedans, and carried up the water-steps into a high garden, with pavilions, and then on to other gardens away from the river. Golden gables shone above the trees. The hedges were full of blooms and bees, and lovely birds went flashing by. The trees were hung with red lanterns that seemed as light as air; and there were dragon kites in the sky. It was like an ethereal paradise, even to the now silent Boston merchant.

A vista opened, showing a house where guards in brilliant Chinese uniforms stood at the door. Then again gongs sounded.

Three mandarins in robes of silk, their buttons of rank glittering in their caps, came down the wide pathway, as though to meet the visitors, before whose chairs little Sky-High walked. One of them, a stately man, nearly seven feet high, suddenly spread out his arms; whereupon Sky-High rushed forward, prostrated himself, and was almost wrapped from sight, as he was lifted in the immense sleeves of silk and gold.

Mr. Van Buren was now truly filled with amazement. Little Sky-High's mistress was terrified. The children didn't know exactly what to think, sitting together in their sedan, only that they were glad to see the tall mandarin enfold their own dear Sky-High in his flowing

silk robes! Little Lucy was half crying. "I believe, I do believe, that he *was* a wang all the time!" she at last said to Charlie.

The palace was wonderful. Strange lamps hung over them as they passed in. There were beautiful couches and chairs, with gilded arms and silken cushions. The walls were set with carvings and perforated work. Here hung bars of musical bells; there stood great jars and vases; everywhere were fantastic furnishings of silks and costly metals. Feathery green bamboos grew in dragon pots. In the corners stood grotesque figures in armor.

The lamps in their golden lattices burst into soft flame.

"Unaccountable!" said Mr. Van Buren to himself. "Sky-High would hardly be better welcomed were he the wang that Lucy dreamed him to be!"

"Mandarin of Boston," said the tall Chinaman, with an obeisance the like of which was never made in western lands, "welcome to our country; you have been good, indeed, to this boy — the Light of my Eyes, the Heart of my Heart! Madam of this illustrious mandarin, never will I forget you, nor "— turning to the two half-frightened children — "nor you, my little Prince and Princess of the Golden Dome beyond the seas! All shall always be well for you all in our country!"

The tall Chinaman spoke in "flowery English," easily; but the American family knew

not what to say, nor how to answer, and they bowed in silence and Lucy said to herself, "The little wang knew what to do in my country, but I do not know what to do in his!"

A little later Mrs. Van Buren, beckoning him to her side as though she were in her own house, said to Sky-High, in lowered tones, "Is this tall mandarin the mandarin in Manchuria that was your master before you came to America?"

Little Sky-High bowed, with a sudden blink of his almond eyes. "Mistress," said he, "he was the mandarin who sent me to America, in care of the consul, that I might know of the American home-life. He wishes me to learn everything that will be of good to me and my country when I am a man"—

"Is he any kinsman of yours?" interrupted his mistress.

"Yes, my noble madam."

"Pray, what relation may he be to you?" Mrs. Van Buren asked, a strange sensation rushing over her.

Lucy and Charles stood near, drinking in every word.

"The prince is my father, mistress," answered little Sky-High.

The two children, standing in the shelter of a carven screen, clapped their hands in the American fashion. Lucy cried out, though softly, "Oh, Sky-High, we are so glad, so glad! You *are* a wang! You were a wang all the time!"

"Even as you treated me, always, my little Lady of the Lotus!" answered Sky-High, bowing before the children and their mother in the manner of his gorgeous father.

That night there was a feast in the summer palace of the Canton mandarin in honor of the return of the little prince, and the visit of his great American friend, the mandarin of Boston.

Over the tea of Dharma the mandarins related Chinese tales for the entertainment of the illustrious American. The little prince told the story of the German collier family who changed a haunting evil into a guardian angel.

And the prince, his father, said, "That must be a true tale, for it is as it would be with men and spirits in China. The wisdom of Buddha is in the story."

The next day, in the pavilion by the lake of the rosy nelumbiums, where she sat with her mother, and the wonderful Chinese ladies and children, little Lucy said to Sky-High. "I always treated you like a wang, didn't I?"

"And we will treat you here as a viceroy would treat another viceroy's little girl," said Sky-High — whose real name was Ching — the Prince Ching.

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